

Khajuraho



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KHAJURAHO

J. VIJAYATUNGA



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January 1960 (Magha 1881)

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UP State Museum, Lucknow

Some 370 miles from Delhi by way of Jhansi is Khajuraho, the site of one of the most beautiful groups of mediaeval Indian temples. In recent years they have attracted much attention from artists, archaeologists and scholars all over the world. Today Khajuraho is definitely on the tourist's map.

Of about 85 temples which are believed to have been built by the Chandela kings between 950 and 1050 A.D., only some 22 have survived the ravages of Man and Time. They represent the Indian art of temple sculpture in its full bloom.

Should one arrive at Khajuraho late in the evening and come suddenly upon these temples standing solid against the evening landscape, one cannot but be struck by their lone grandeur and majesty. Imagination tries to recapture the condition of these temples and the atmosphere of the place ten centuries ago. Today, evening worship takes place only at the Mrityunjaya Mahadeva Temple (Matangesvara Linga Temple), remarkable for its *linga*, 3 ft. 8 in. in diameter and 8 ft. 4 in. in height. On certain festival days offerings and worship take place at certain other temples, too; and, on these occasions, one hears the ringing of bells and chanting of hymns and the voices of many worshippers. But when the Chandela kingdom was at its zenith, there is no doubt that the temples must have been thronged day long by worshippers, with the chanting of hymns from myriad throats punctuated by the ringing of bells.

And who might have been those worshippers ? A satisfactory answer cannot be given in a sentence, but we may conclude, from the evidence of the sculpture, that the worshippers at Khajuraho practised the Shakti cult, and that the people of the place were a hardy local stock with an infusion of Rajput blood. For a brief period of two centuries, these virile people of Bundelkhand in Central India spread terror among their neighbours. According to local legend the Chandelas' conquests extended beyond South India even to Simhala (Ceylon).

Thirty-four miles to the north of Khajuraho lies Mahoba (short for Mahotsavanagara or the City of the Great Festival).

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Thirty-four miles to the north of Khajuraho lies Mahoba (short for Mahotsavanagara or the City of the Great Festival).

Mahoba and Khajuraho, along with Kalanjara and Ajayagarh, were the principal towns of the Chandela kingdom. How the kingdom got the name of Jejabhukti or Jejakabukti¹ (the former name of Bundelkhand) is interesting in that it throws light on the dynasty. Hwen Tshang² who visited it in 641 A.D. calls it Chi-chi-to (Jajhoti). Most historians agree that when King Chandravarman established the Chandela rule in the ninth century, he supplanted a dynasty known as the Parihars.

However, before we lose ourselves in a maze of historical speculation, let us have another look at the temples which dominate what is today a desolate landscape.

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For convenience of study the temples may be divided into three groups:

WESTERN GROUP

1. Chaunsat Yogini Temple
2. Lalguan Mahadeo Temple
3. Kandariya Mahadeo Temple
4. Mahadeo Temple
5. Devi Jagadamba Temple
6. Chitragupta or Bharatji Temple
7. Chopra Tank
8. Viswanatha and Nandi Temples
9. Parvati Temple
10. Lakshmana-Ramachandra or Chaturbhuj Temple
11. Mrityunjaya Mahadeva Temple (Matangesvara)
12. Varaha Temple

SOUTH-EASTERN GROUP

1. Hanuman Temple
2. Brahma Temple

¹ "At Madanpur about 50 miles to the north of Saugor, a new inscription of Prithvi Raj Chauhan was discovered. It records his conquest of the country of Jejakabukti. The same spelling of the name I have since found in a Mahoba inscription. This then was its original form, which soon became shortened to Jejabhukti, as written by Abu Rihan, just as Tribhukti became Tirabhuti and Tirhut."—A. Cunningham.

² Spelling adopted by Cunningham. Hiuen Tsang is another variation.

3. Vamana Temple
4. Kakra Marh
5. Javeri Temple
6. Ghantai Temple
7. Adinatha Temple
8. Parasvanatha Temple

SOUTHERN GROUP

1. Duldeo Temple
2. Jatkari Temple

Not the least important feature of Khajuraho is the open air Museum of the Archaeological Department. It was established in 1910 by Mr. W. E. Jardine, a former political agent in Bundelkhand. Standing to the south of the Matangesvara temple, the Museum has a large and arresting collection of statuary. We try to have a glimpse of these, through the closed steel gates, for we have arrived after closing time.

The evening service at the Siva Linga (Matangesvara) temple has just started and there is an atmosphere of solemnity well in keeping with the distance in time between Khajuraho's heyday ten centuries ago and today. We ascend the long steep stone steps to the temple where in the dim recess, lit only by a flickering oil wick, stands the *linga*. The priests are offering *puja*. We pay our homage to the symbol of creation, in this instance personified by the *linga*, and retrace our steps.

The dusk is fast enveloping Khajuraho. The *sikharas* of other temples, near and far, are suspended in the darkness as if they were hanging from the sky and not built on earth. Our eyes linger on these dim outlines of the walls and foundations of temples that are near—the Lakshmana temple, the Kandariya Mahadeo temple and another renovated in the last fifty years by a Raja of Chhatarpur. The imagination conjures up the music of flute and drum and cymbals and the muted voices from ten thousand throats. There was a time when these temples had their constant throng of visitors, when heralds and trumpeters cleared the way for the ladies of the palace as they came at sunset to offer *puja* at the Siva Linga temple or the Kandariya Mahadeo temple. We wend our way contemplatively to the

State Circuit House to spend the night and be ready for a closer look at the fabulous Khajuraho the following morning.

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But sleep eludes us. A thousand visions chase one another as one lies sleepless, trying to reconstruct a vanished glory and a past that appears somewhat unreal in our prosaic and mechanised twentieth century. We turn the pages of the *Imperial Gazetteer* and to the writings of British archaeologists who blazed a trail to these temples, cut down jungles and bared the glories of Khajuraho to the sight of art-lovers and tourists.

A reliable authority on Khajuraho is Major-General Sir Alexander Cunningham, India's first Director-General of Archaeology (1871-1885). There have been many others—epigraphists like Prof. F. Kielhorn and critics like Ananda K. Coomaraswamy—through whose labours the Chandela dynasty, which created these remarkable monuments at Khajuraho more than a thousand years ago, take on a clearer outline. We are also indebted to earlier chroniclers, namely, Abu Rihan and Ibn Batuta and the famous Chinese traveller, Hwen Thsang.

In ancient times, this region was known as Jajhoti after the name of a clan of Jajhotiya Brahmins. Following the decline of Buddhism in the vast tract extending from Afghanistan to Orissa, the clan exerted an extraordinary influence upon the Rajputs, the ruling class of that time. In more recent times, the region came to be called Bundelkhand, after the name of a stream, the Bundela Nala, which joins the Ganges near Banaras. To quote Cunningham:

"The Brahmans derive the name of Jajhotiya from Yagur-hota, an observance of the Yajur-Ved: but as the name is applied to the *baniyas*, or grain-dealers, as well as to the Brahmans, I think it almost certain that it must be a mere geographical designation derived from the name of their country, Jajhoti. This opinion is confirmed by the other well-known names of the Brahmanical tribes, as Kanojiya from Kanoj; Gaur from Gaur; Sarwariya or Sarjuparia from Sarjupar, the opposite bank of the Sarju river; Dravira from Dravira in the Dakhan; Maithila from Mithila, etc. These examples are sufficient to show the prevalence of geographical names amongst the

divisions of the Brahmanical tribes, and as the division is found most numerous in the province from which it derives its name I conclude with some certainty that the country in which the Jajhotiya Brahmans preponderate must be the actual province of Jajhoti."

The Chandela or the Chandratreya dynasty which ruled this region a thousand years ago was a short-lived dynasty, like the Karkotas whose most eminent representative was Lalitaditya-Muktapida (of the eighth century) with whose name is associated the famed Sun Temple of Martand in Kashmir. Worship of Surya or the Sun came into vogue during the period between 800 to 1000 A. D. The Sun Temples of Multan, Modhera, Konarka and Martand were all constructed during this period, though in the case of Modhera and Konarka there were later reconstructions.¹

This fact is mentioned here because the Chandela dynasty ruled between the ninth and eleventh centuries, and there is a Surya Temple at Khajuraho. Moreover, the pagan sexual rituals associated with the other Sun Temples are depicted at the Khajuraho Temples also.

To revert to the Chandela kings, Chandra Varma was the founder of the dynasty. His capital was Mahoba at the junction of the Betwa and Jumna. Successive Chandela kings beautified their kingdom by the excavation of a number of lakes. Kirat Sagar, about one and a half miles in circumference, was built by Kirti Varma (1063-1085); Madan Sagar by Madana Varma (1130-1165); and Kalyan Sagar by Vijayapala (1045-1065).

Let us turn to a contemporary bard named Chand. His version of the origin of the Chandelas is poetical but it adds up to the known facts. According to Chand, the Chandelas were descendants of Hemavati and Chandrama, the Moon-God. Hemavati was the daughter of Hemraj, the officiating priest of Indrajit, the Gahirwar Raja of Banaras. The beautiful Hemavati one day went to the Rati Talal to bathe, and was seen and embraced by Chandrama. She was not averse to his bold advances but when he was leaving her she put him under a curse. "Why do you curse me?" asked Chandrama. "How shall my dishonour be effaced when I am without a husband?"

¹ "The mysterious Konarka temple likewise is a reconstruction, in the thirteenth century, of an earlier sanctuary."—Dr. H. Goetz.

Hemavati shouted back at him. "Fear not," he said, "Your son will be born on the bank of the Karnavati river. Take him to Khajuraya and perform a sacrifice. In Mahoba he will reign and will become a great king. He will possess the philosopher's stone that will turn iron into gold. On the hill of Kalinjar he will build a fort. When your son is sixteen years of age you must perform a yajna to wipe off your disgrace."

Thus was born to her a son on the bank of Karnavati.¹ His celestial father, Chandrama, attended by all the gods, performed a great festival or *Mahotsava*, and during the festival Vrihaspati wrote the horoscope of the child who was named Chandra Varma.

When, at the age of sixteen, he killed a tiger, Chandrama appeared and presented him with the philosopher's stone, and taught him the art of ruling. Chandra Varma built the fort of Kalinjar. Then he went to Kharjurpur, where he performed a sacrifice to wipe off his mother's shame and built eighty-five temples. Finally, he went to *Mahotsava* (Mahoba), the place of Chandrama's great festival, and made it his capital.

With his successors we emerge from the delightful fairyland of legend to the solid facts of history. These temples of Khajuraho are their creations and the many inscriptions about the construction of the temples provide valuable clues to the history of the dynasty.²

Hwen Thsang reckoned the capital of Jajhoti to be 167 miles north-east of Ujjain. But as Cunningham points out, while the direction is correct, the distance should have been upwards of 300 miles whether we take Mahoba or Khajuraho to have been the chief city at the time of Hwen Thsang's visit. Hwen Thsang describes the capital as being upwards of two and half miles in circuit and, Buddhist as he was, dubs the inhabitants as heretics. He writes: "The king himself was a Brahman, but a staunch Buddhist. The country was known for its fertility and was frequented by learned men from all parts of India." Hwen Thsang came across many dozens of Buddhist monasteries.

While Hwen Thsang does not name the capital—he mentions

¹ Karnavati is now shown on maps as the Kayan or more often as the Kane River.

² Cunningham concludes that "according to the genealogies furnished by the inscriptions, the most probable period for the establishment of the Chandel dynasty and the foundation of Mahoba is about A.D. 800."

only the region—Abu Rihan who accompanied Mahmud of Ghazni when the latter attacked Kalinjar in A.D. 1022 refers to “Kajurahah, the capital of Jajahuti”.

Ibn Batuta is our next authority. He visited “Kajura” about A.D. 1335 and mentions a lake about a mile in length, and the temples full of idols which stood around the lake.

While reading these fascinating accounts, the hours have passed quickly and it is long past midnight. The few lights of Khajuraho, including those of the Circuit House, are out. A peculiarly disturbing stillness envelops the scene. The panicky howl of the jackals only enhances the stillness of the night. We close the window to rest for the night.

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The sun is smiling upon the landscape. Khajuraho is awake. All the temples of the western group face the rising sun and, as we come closer, we notice that there is not a corner or a pillar in a temple that is deprived of light. The temples have been so planned that light radiates into their very interior.

THE WESTERN GROUP

Before we go inside the temples or pause to admire the sculpture, let us take a complete view of the western group of temples and admire their placing, their spacing, and finally their architecture. The raised platforms, the projecting entrances, the lateral naves, all these lead our gaze in a final sweep to the *sikhara* with the *amalaka*, or crown, on top. This sense of elevation, the upward sweep, is the most characteristic feature of the temples of the western group.

Kandariya Mahadeo

Let us now enter the Kandariya Mahadeo, the largest of the temples. It is 109 ft. in length and 59½ ft. in width outside, and 116½ ft. in height from ground level and 88 ft. above its own floor. The plinth is 13 ft. high, and above this are three broad bands of sculpture one above the other. These are succeeded by several bands of projecting mouldings. Above these are the

pillared balconies of the nave, transept and sanctum. They add up to a "gorgeous luxury of embellishment", to quote Cunningham.

The usual divisions of this type of temple in North India, particularly of this period—Martand, for example—are to be found at Kandariya as well as the other Khajuraho temples. These are the porch or *ardhamandapa*, the *mandapa* or nave, the *maha-mandapa* or transept, the *antarala* or intermediate chamber and the *garbha-griha* which is the sanctum. Over each section is a pinnacled roof, each pinnacle rising from the low pyramidal roof of the entrance in a gentle gradient until the summit is reached with the spire over the *murti* or presiding image. Three porches at the back and sides create a passage of light around the sanctum.

Now the ceilings attract our attention. These recessed ceilings are the height of ingenuity and architectural skill. The ceiling above the four central pillars, with eight cusped circles, is particularly impressive. A pendant hangs from the centre of each cusp and the whole pattern, further ornamented by a larger circle filled with intricate designs, conjures up a vision of beauty which makes the onlooker forget the immediate surroundings.

All this time we have been resolutely keeping our eyes away from the profusion of sculpture so that we may enjoy it last without distraction. Now we turn our eyes to it. What a wealth of carving! Walls, pillars, the projecting brackets—there is sculpture everywhere. Cunningham counted "no less than 226 statues inside the temple, and 646 outside, or 872 statues altogether of which the greater number are from two and a half to nearly three feet in height."

The exterior has three successive bands of sculpture. There are quite a number of erotic figures, single as well as *mithuna* (couples), along with the usual sculptures of the Hindu pantheon, all carved with perfection.

Kandariya is a Siva temple and the marble *linga* ($4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in girth) in the sanctum is supplemented by a Siva with Brahma and Vishnu images to the right and left. Masons' marks and the word *dasan*, meaning "beam", carved in Kutila characters on the underside of a beam are evidence, according to Cunningham, of its date being tenth or eleventh century.

The great savant Ananda Coomaraswamy considered the Kandariya Mahadeo temple as the finest of Hindu temples at Khajuraho.

Lakshmana Temple

Let us now turn to the Lakshmana Temple with its four small corner temples. It has also been known by other names such as Ramachandra and Chaturbhuja. Chaturbhuja, meaning "the four-armed", is another description of Vishnu. The temple is 85 ft. 4 in. in length and 44 ft. in breadth.

There are two bands of sculpture outside above the plinth. Cunningham found 230 statues outside and 170 inside, each figure 2 to 2½ ft. in height. To quote him: "The mouldings of the basement terrace are, however, much richer than those of any other temple as they are covered with boar-hunts and processions of horses, elephants and soldiers armed with many varieties of weapons." The *murti* or image here is a *Nara-Simha* or Man-Lion, an incarnation of Vishnu. The four-armed male figure, with three heads (a human head flanked by two lion-heads), is four feet and one inch in height. Masons' marks in Kutila characters indicate the period as being tenth or eleventh century.

An important feature of the Lakshmana Temple is a large stone slab, 6 ft. in length and 2¾ ft. in width, built into the wall on the right side of the entrance. It was found amongst the ruins at the base of the temple some time after 1843 during repairs ordered by the Raja of Chattarpur. The inscription on this slab throws light on the chronology of the Chandelas.

The four smaller corner temples have been mentioned. A fifth temple completes the adjuncts of the Lakshmana Temple. This is the Varaha Temple facing the Lakshmana Temple to the east. The Boar or Varaha is an incarnation of Vishnu. The Varaha is housed in an open temple, 20½ ft. by 16 ft., with three pillars at each corner and two on the western side which is the entrance. Overlapping square stone slabs form a roof.

The Varaha is 8 ft. 9 in. in length and 5 ft. 9½ in. in height. It stands with its two left legs forward. A *Naga* (serpent) trails itself along the pedestal, under the Varaha, its tail meeting the Varaha's tail and its head weighed down by a seated human figure. Close to its unseen head are the feet of another human

figure, representing possibly Prithvi or Earth. The faint outline of a hand which is seen is evidently part of Prithvi. The entire surface of the Varaha from head to feet and tail is covered with rows of tiny figures of which as many as 764 have been counted.

Devi Temple

Close to the Varaha temple is the small Devi Temple enshrining a statue of a four-armed female figure. Over the doorway of the sanctum is a figure of Vishnu, with Brahma and Siva to the left and right of the central figure. Devi is another name for Siva's consort, Parvati, while Devi as a suffix is also used for Vishnu's consort, Lakshmi.

Mrityunjaya Mahadeva

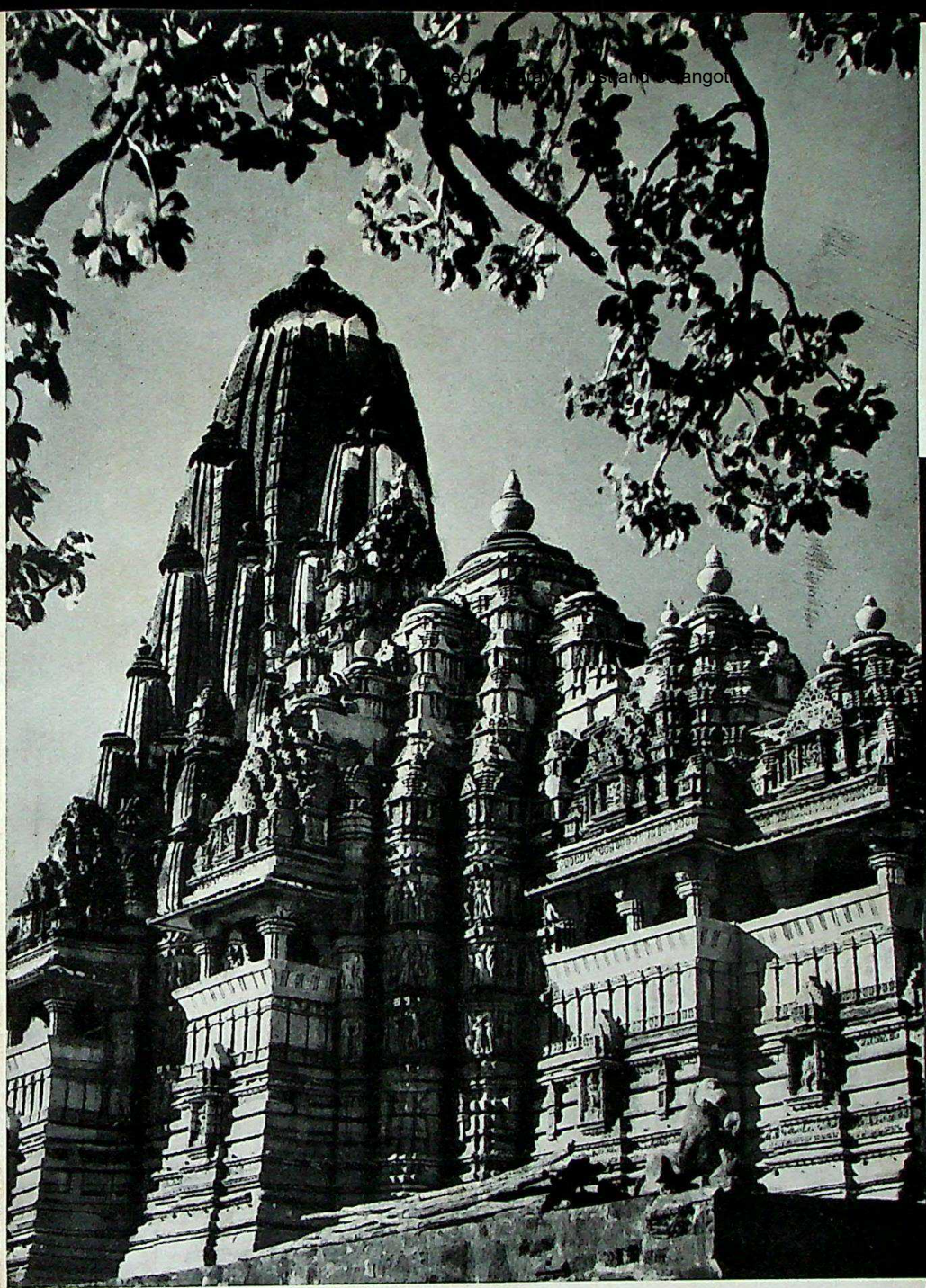
Thirty feet to the south of the Lakshmana (Chaturbhuj) Temple is a Linga Temple. Known also as Mritang Mahadeo (Mahadeva, the Victor over Death), it is locally known as the Siva Linga Temple. The prominent feature of the temple is the eight-foot high *linga*, mentioned earlier. It is a square temple with sides measuring $24\frac{1}{2}$ ft., while the outer measurements are 35 ft. each side. The porch is $18\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long and $9\frac{1}{4}$ ft. broad. Once its sides must have had carvings, but today it presents a plain whitewashed surface, the result of recent conservation. The pyramidal roof is crowned with a gilt pinnacle.

Mahadeo Temple

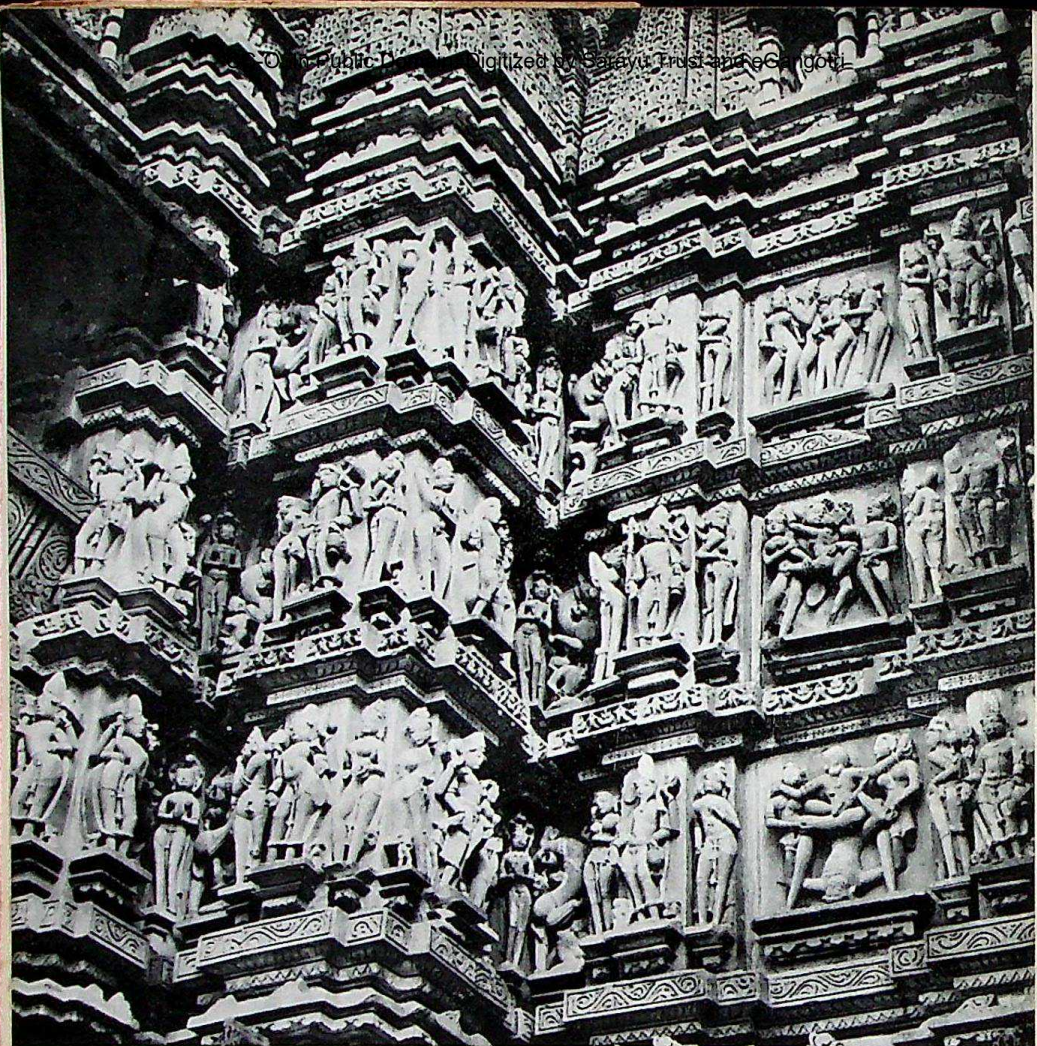
Returning to the Kandariya temple as our starting point, we discern to the north a half-ruined huddle of a temple called Mahadeo by the villagers. Over the entrance is a figure of Siva, with Brahma and Vishnu to the right and left. From its present measurements— $18\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $13\frac{1}{2}$ ft.—it appears to be a subsidiary shrine.

Devi Jagadamba Temple

A little to the north of the Kandariya Mahadeo temple is the Devi Jagadamba temple. Though lacking the magnificence and the proportions of the Kandariya, it has a compact beauty of its own. Seventy-seven feet long and forty-nine and a half feet broad, it is built on the plan of a cross with two transepts leading to the *mahamandapa*. The sanctum is reached through the usual



Kandariya Mahadeo Temple



*A view of the sculptured façade,
Kandariya Mahadeo Temple*

*A closer view of the relief sculptures,
Kandariya Mahadeo Temple*





*An amorous embrace,
Kandariya Mahadeo
Temple*

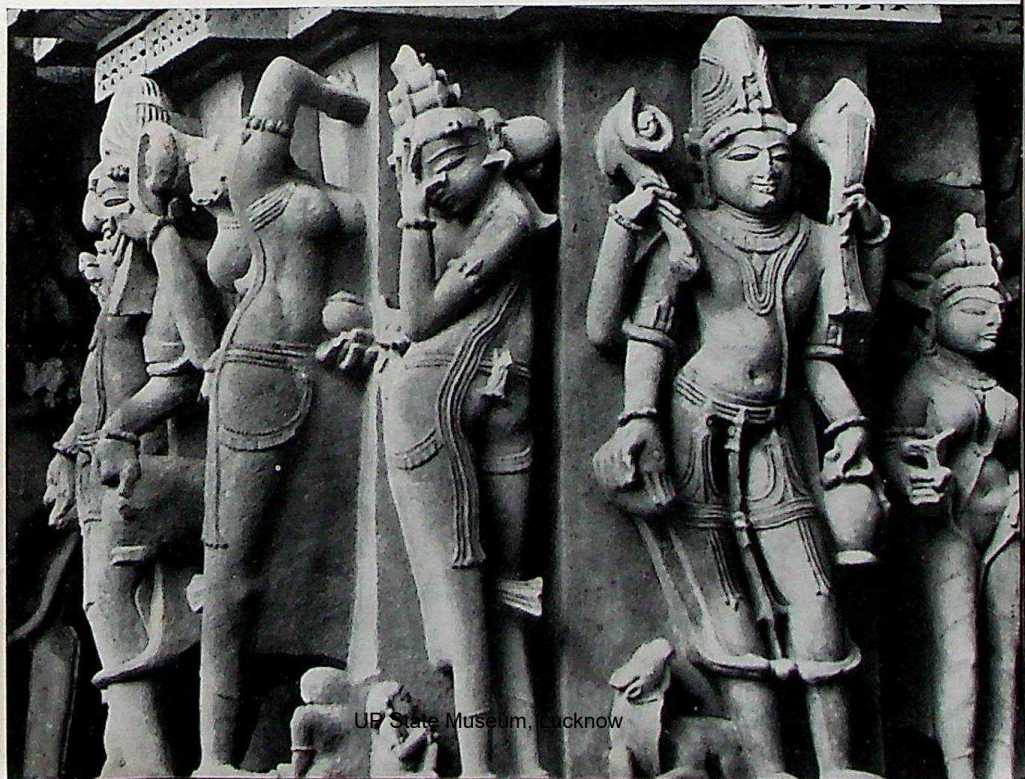


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(Left)

*Lady at her Toilet and Nandi,
Siva's mount—sculptures from
Kandariya Mahadeo Temple*

*Sculptured Figures from
Parasvanatha
Temple (right) and from
Kandariya Mahadeo
Temple (below)*

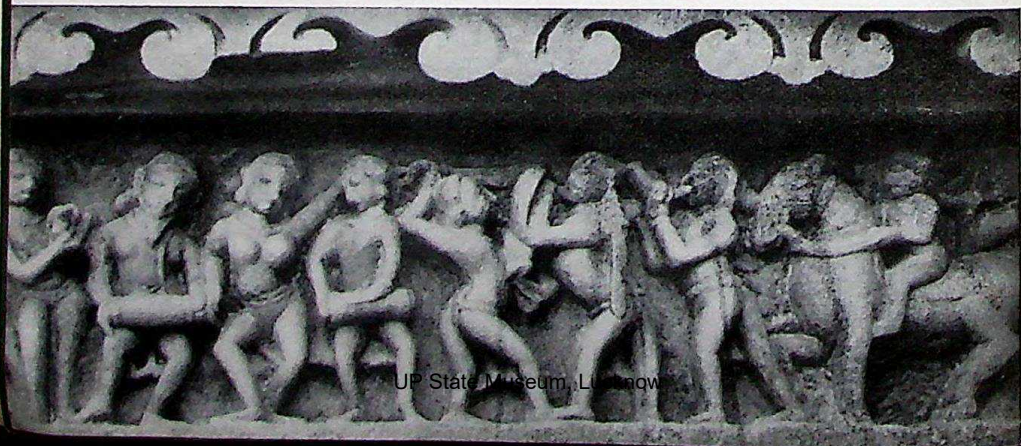


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*Sculptures on the exterior wall,
Kandariya Mahadeo Temple*

*A horizontal band of sculptures :
Kandariya Mahadeo Temple*



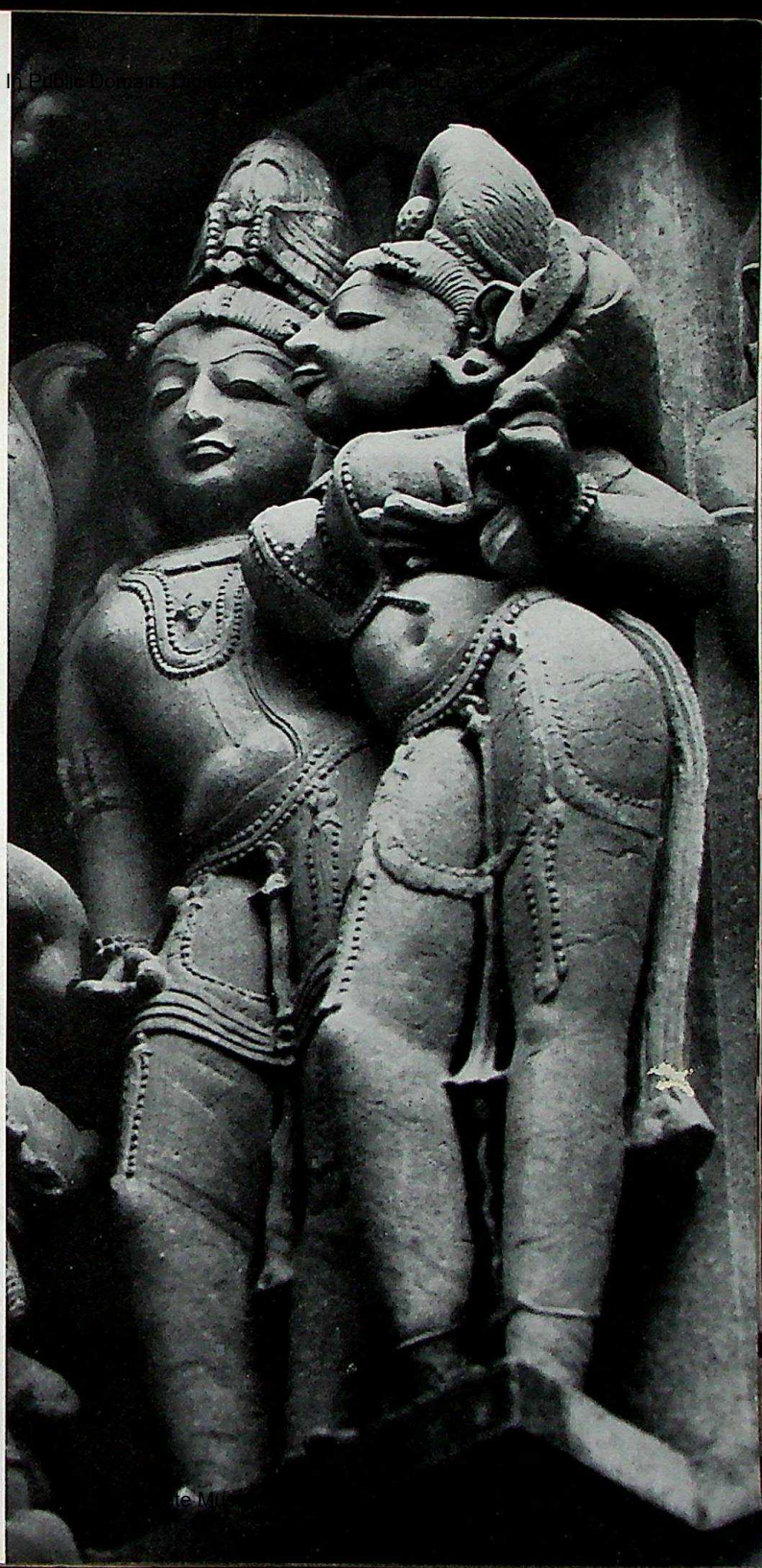


*A girl at her
toilet, Laksh-
mana Temple*

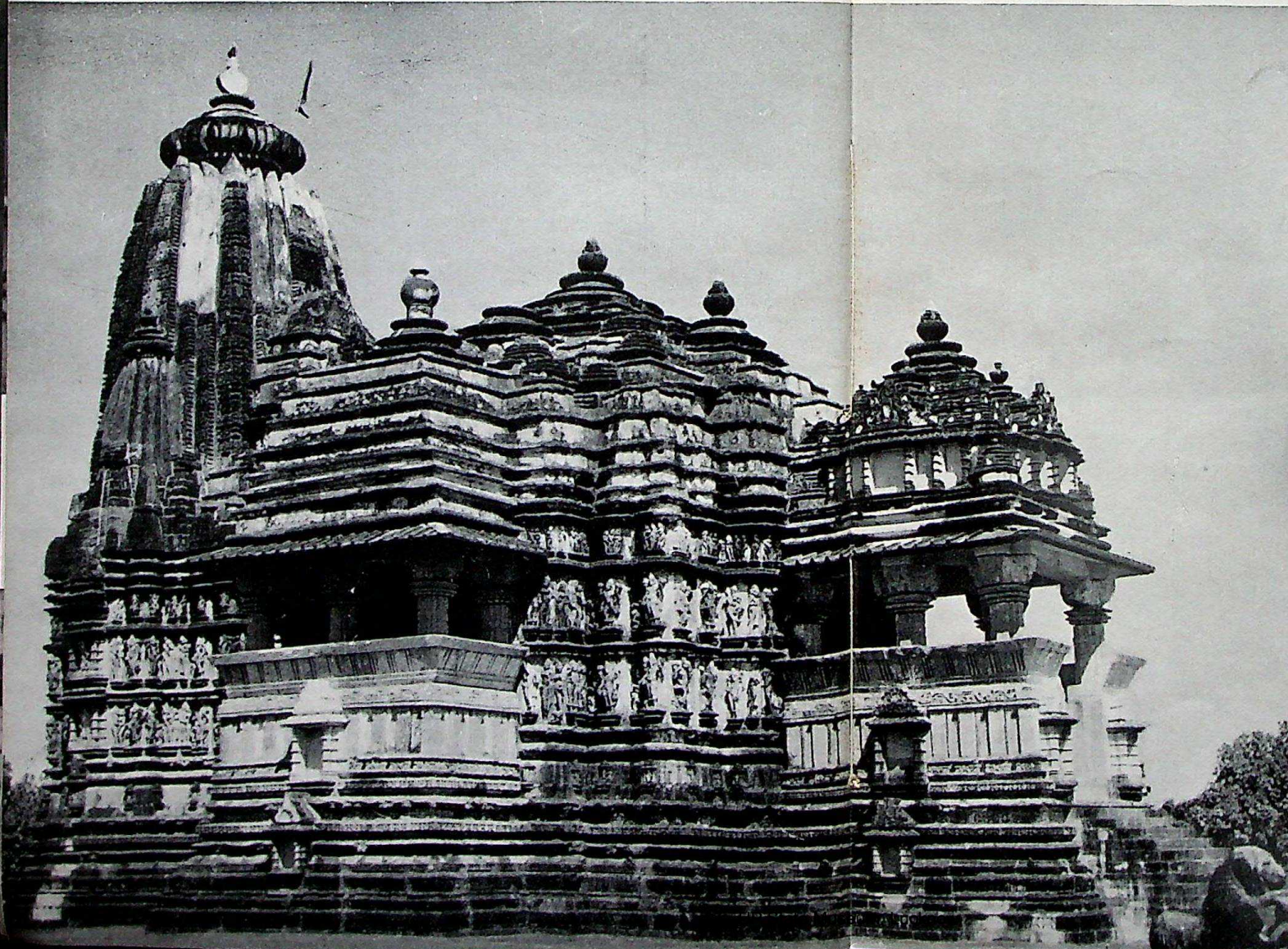


*Amorous Couple, from
Devi Jagadamba Temple*

*Siva and Parvati,
Devi Jagadamba
Temple*

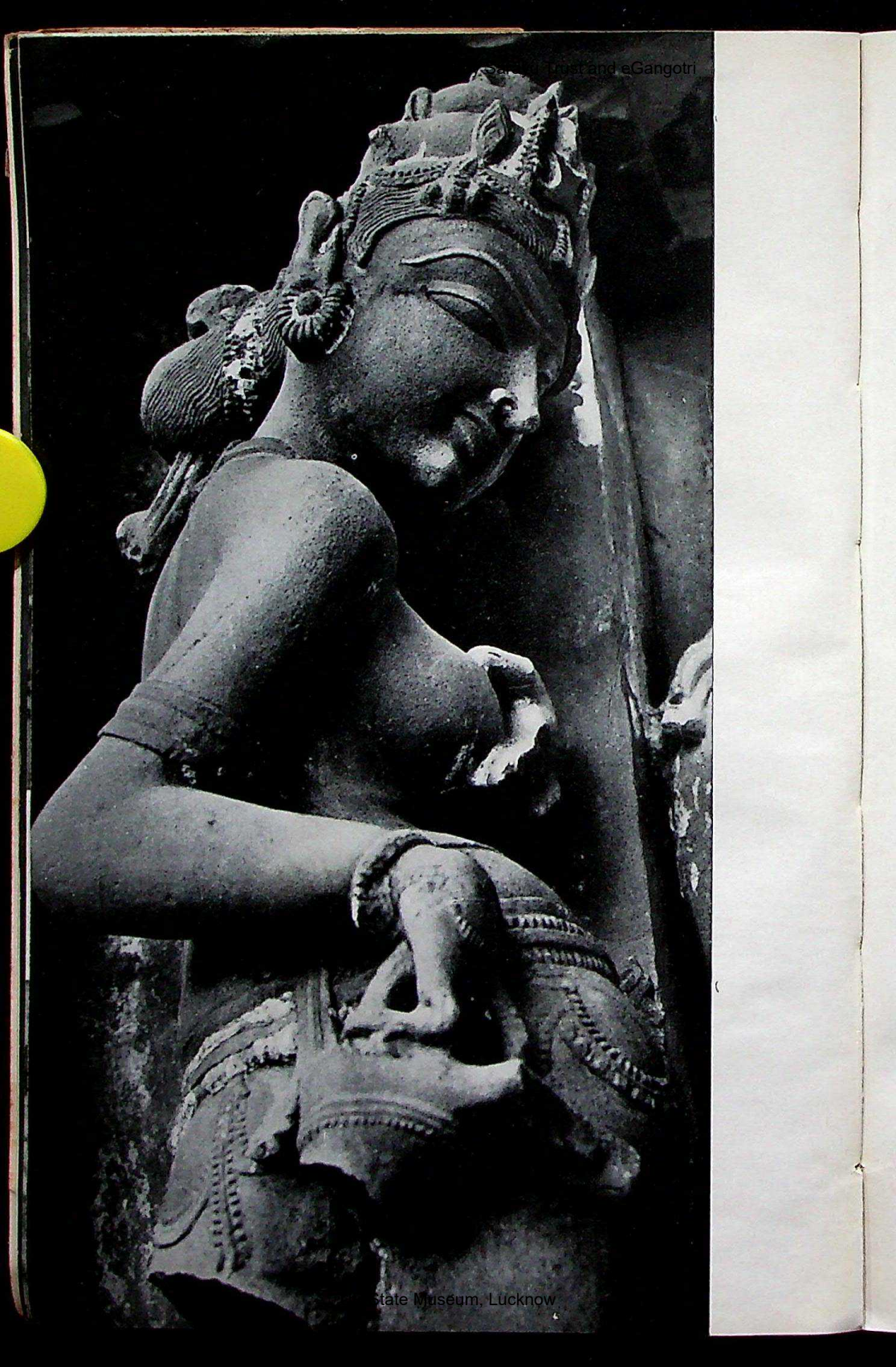


Devi Jagadamba Temple

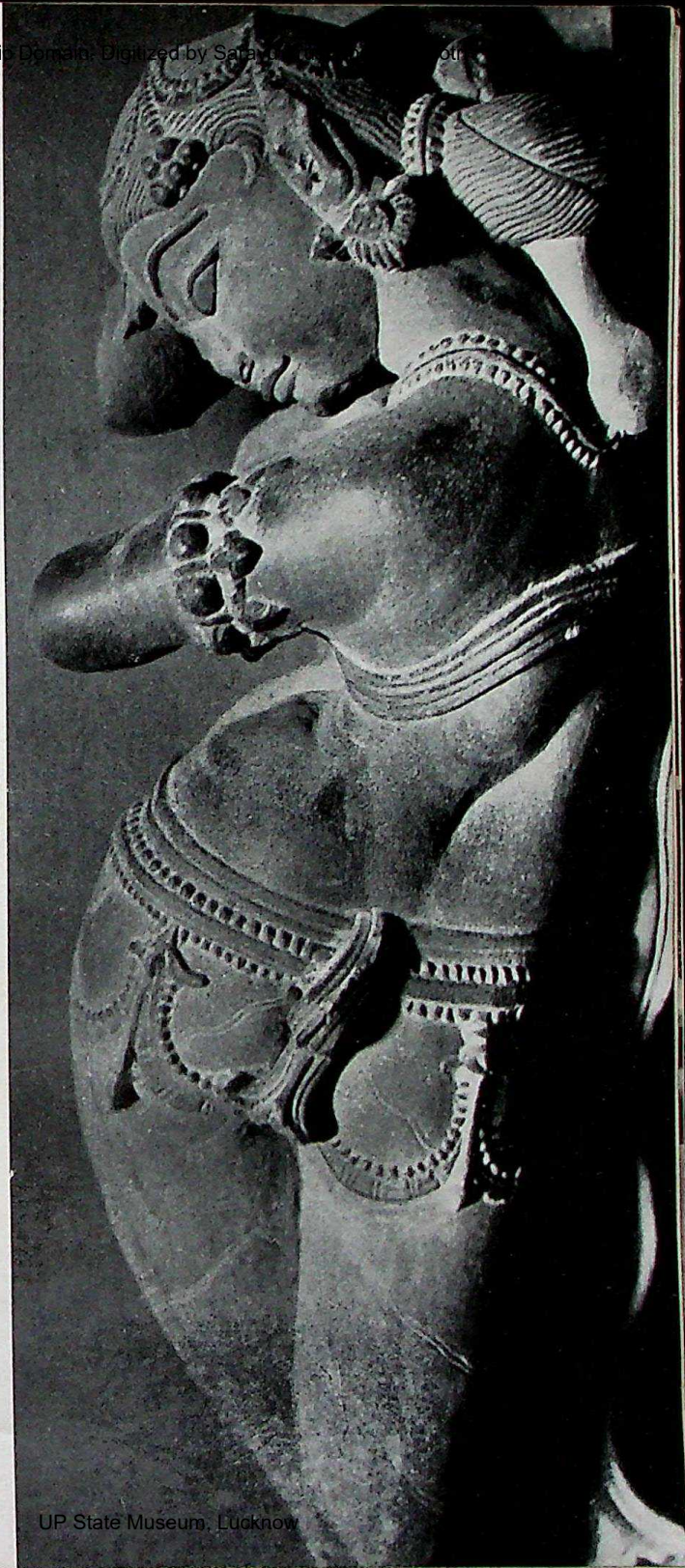


Sura Sundari from Devi Jagadamba Temple





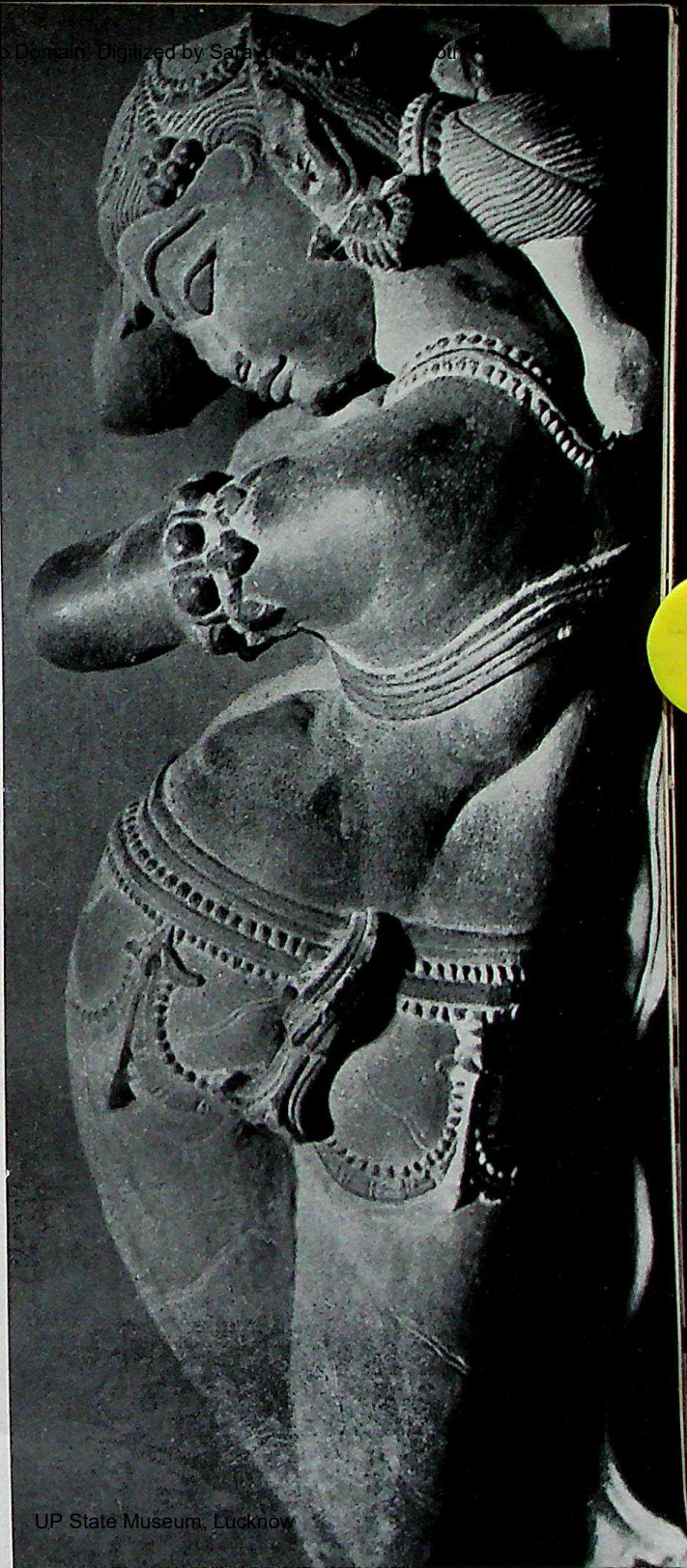
*Female Figures in the
Viswanatha Temple*



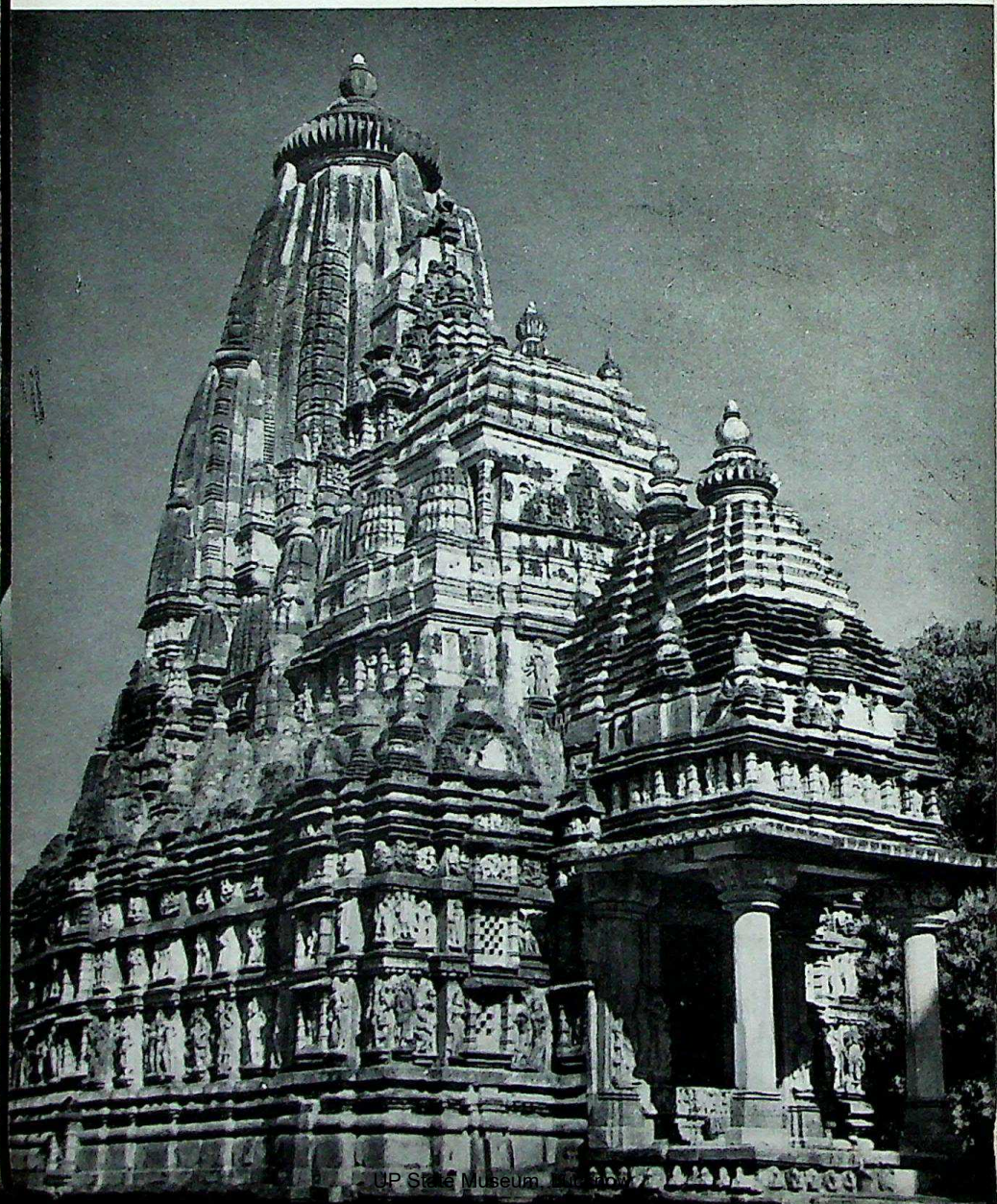
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*Female Figures in the
Viswanatha Temple*



Parasvanatha Temple from the Jain group



divisions. The absence of a circumambulatory passage is compensated for by open verandahs that lead from the entrance. Steps cut into the low railing on either side of the *ardhamandapa* lead to the balconies from where some of the sculptures on the outer bands can be viewed at a close range.

The ceilings are similar to those in the Kandariya temple, and have the same cusped designs. Among the Dikpala figures there is one of Yama. The statue of Siva with his three heads and eight arms is sculpturally a great achievement; despite the eight arms and the three faces it is aesthetically completely satisfying.

Over the entrance to the sanctum is a carving of Vishnu, but in the sanctum itself is enshrined the River Goddess Ganga, mounted on her *Vahana* (vehicle), the Makara. Today this image, painted black, is claimed by the local folk as that of Devi Jagadamba or Kali, and is worshipped as such.

Mahadeva Temple

Partly ruined, and situated between the Kandariya and the Devi Jagadamba temples, is the Mahadeva temple. Only the lintel of the sanctum remains and on this is a carved figure of Mahadeva (Siva). A perfect *sardula* (leogriff) is one of the main attractions of the Mahadeva temple today.

The figure of the human antagonist pitting his strength against the heavier weight of the lion has been taken by many writers on Khajuraho to be that of a female. Close examination shows that the figure represents a male, possibly a warrior, not intent on destroying the lion, which is in a friendly enough attitude, but more intent on proving his strength against that of the lion. Sculpturally, these *sardulas* which are contained within an imaginary semi-circle possess a balance which indicates the highest artistic training on the part of the sculptor.

Chitragupta Temple

Slightly to the north of Devi Jagadamba temple is the Chitragupta temple. Though built almost on the same pattern as the former, it gives an impression of greater height. Its outer measurements are 87 ft. in length and 58 ft. in breadth. Particularly fascinating is the ceiling with its numerous circles weaving in and out of each other.

The presiding deity is Surya, the Sun-God. It is a five-foot

high statue, the arms broken, but in its armless state it could not have been bettered by the best sculptors of ancient Greece. The torso, hips and legs suggest the poise of one driving a chariot. The pedestal of the statue contains the fore-shortened figures of seven horses. In keeping with the legend that the Sun-God's feet should not be seen by mortal eye, his feet and legs are encased in boots which are knee-high.¹ Altogether the whole piece within its carved frame is an example of the highest art.

The eleven-headed Vishnu is another special feature of the Chitragupta temple. The frontal aspect of this image is that of Vishnu and the others represent his other incarnations. In a recessed band on the outside is a frieze which shows a group of workers carrying heavy stones, scenes of the hunt, dance, elephant fights and processions. The importance of this temple can hardly be over-emphasised.

Viswanatha and Nandi Temples

These two temples—situated to the north of the main group, viz., Lakshmana, Mrityunjaya Mahadeva, and Kandariya—face each other and seemingly form one unit and were possibly built about the same time.

Two short flights of steps, one from the north and another from the south, take the worshipper to the raised platform of both the temples. Built on the same plan as the Kandariya temple, the Viswanatha temple measures 87½ ft. by 46 ft. and the image of Viswanatha (Siva) adorns the sanctum. Two of the shrines have been destroyed but those on the north-east and south-west remain. There are some perfect *apsaras* on the walls around the sanctum. Particularly noteworthy is the female playing on a flute. The life-like movements and the proportions of the figure are difficult to excel. Another figure of a woman wringing out the water from her long hair is also a fine piece of art. Not so happy is the woman with a child in her arms. Curiously enough there are very few figures at Khajuraho depicting a mother suckling her child.

There are two inscriptions built into the walls of the *mandapa*.

¹ The idols of Surya wear Scythian boots, and in a number of cases also Sassanian costumes. The *Bhavishya Purana* mentions as their priests the Maga Brahmans, thus establishing the identity of Surya with the Mithra of the Iranian Magi. After the Rigvedic god Mitra had sunk into oblivion, Surya was absorbed into the Brahmanic sun-god, Vishnu.—Dr. H. Goetz.

One refers to the temple itself. Dated Vikrama Samvat 1059 (A.D. 1002-03) it mentions the building of a temple by King Dhanga for the god Sambhu (Siva) and the installation of an emerald *linga*. The emerald *linga* has disappeared and in its place there is one of granite. The other inscription dated Vikrama Samvat 1058 (A.D. 1001-02) records the building of a temple of Vaidyanatha, and a number of residences for Brahmins by one Kokkale. The Vaidyanatha temple no longer exists and the statue with the inscription was picked up from the ruins and built into the Viswanatha temple.

Chaunsat Yogini Temple

We now move away from the group of richly decorated temples into the bleaker area where is situated the oldest of the Khajuraho temples. This is the Chaunsat Yogini (Sixty-Four Female Goblins) temple. Lying to the south-west of the Sib-sagar, 25 feet above the ground level, it is, unlike other temples at Khajuraho, made entirely of granite. A small shrine of Ganesha stands opposite the Chaunsat Yogini Temple.

The *Yoginis* are female goblins who were attendants of the fierce goddess Kali. Whenever there is battle the goblins are said to rush greedily to the battle-field and drink the blood of those slain. In the *Prabodha Chandraodaya* they are called the spouses of demons who dance on the field of battle.

What remains today of the Chaunsat Yogini is only the shell of the original structure—the walls with 64 small cells. It is an oblong court, 102½ ft. in length and 59½ ft. in breadth. The cells, 3¼ ft. deep, 2 ft. 4½ in. broad and 3¼ ft. high, are cut out of the 5½ ft. thick walls. The opening of each cell is 32 in. high and 18 in. wide. A pyramidal roof over each cell completes the appearance of these shrines where 64 *Yogini* statuettes must have reposed at one time. All except two cells are now empty.

Archaeologists consider it to be the oldest temple at Khajuraho, built prior to A.D. 900. Cunningham places it even earlier. In his opinion the eighth century would be the more likely period.

A feature of most of these temples is the small subsidiary temple opposite. Usually the latter contains a carving of the

Vahanas or animal vehicle of the god or goddess of the main temple. Facing the Chaunsat Yogini Temple is a ruined Ganesha shrine.

Now we turn our attention to a series of mounds, disappointing after the visual feast we have enjoyed in the better preserved temples of the western group. These might well be termed the northern group. Hwen Tshang, it will be recalled, refers to the remains of numerous Buddhist monasteries in this region. These mounds are possibly the ruins of the Buddhist monasteries referred to by the Chinese traveller. They are to be found at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile from the western group.

There is one mound 200 ft. in length from north to south, 150 ft. in width and 15 ft. in height. "It is called," to quote Cunningham, "*Satdhara*, a name which is familiar to us as that of one of the great Buddhist establishments near Bhilsa. The mound is a mass of broken bricks, amongst which I found several door lintels with four-bracket capitals, and two elephants of stone. Three hundred feet to the south there is a smaller mound 80 ft. square, on which I found the walls of a small temple with several plain stone pillars. Five hundred feet to the north-west there is another mound of the same size, and between these are two other smaller mounds and a tank about 200 ft. square. Nearly half a mile east of the *Satdhara* ruin, there is another mound of about the same size, which is also covered with broken bricks and square stones, amongst which I found the lintel of a Vaishnava Temple, with the figure of Vishnu sculptured in the middle. Between these two ruins there are two fine old wells."

Vaman Temple

Not far from these mounds is the Vaman temple. Vaman is the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu. There is the dwarf-god's statue 4 ft. 8 in. high and a small figure of Siva over the entrance with Brahma and Vishnu figures on either side. The temple is $60\frac{1}{4}$ ft. long and $38\frac{3}{4}$ ft. broad, and is poor in comparison with the temples of the western group. Ruins of other smaller temples are also to be seen on another mound near the Vaman temple.

SOUTH-EASTERN GROUP

Hanuman Temple

We may omit mention of certain other smaller temples to be seen in this area and explore the Hanuman temple. Hanuman's statue 7 ft. in height stands outside the small temple which is of comparatively recent origin and constructed of material from an older structure on the spot.

Brahma Temple

Near the Hanuman temple is another small pyramidal structure called the Brahma temple after the four-faced Brahma figure inside it. Over the entrance is a figure of Gadadhar (Vishnu). The temple measures 19 ft. square outside and 10½ ft. square inside. "Its general appearance", Cunningham says, "is very ancient, and its antiquity is, I think, further shown by the mixture of granite and sandstone in its construction so many evidences of superior antiquity, by which I infer that the temple must be older than those of the western group, and may, therefore, date as early as the eighth or ninth century."

Ganthai Temple

Leaving this group of smaller temples, as we wend our way towards the village, we pass the prominent Ganthai temple. An open, pillared structure, 40 ft. by 20 ft., this is obviously the shell of a former temple complete with three *mandapas*. The Ganthai was evidently a Buddhist temple. A seated Buddha removed from this temple is now preserved in the Archaeological Museum.

Several broken statues lying about the ruins, all of them of naked Jain figures of a later period, indicate that the old Buddhist temple was appropriated by the Jains in the eleventh century.

Jain Temples

Past the Ganthai we enter the village, and south of the more congested area we come across the imposing Parasvanatha Jain temple. On its exterior there are the usual three bands of sculptures, among them some of the finest statuary, with the

usual scattering of the provocatively posed erotic figures. The seated figure of Parasvanatha, and the nude male and female figures on either side of the door to the sanctum, afford a pleasing contrast to the familiar device of the *garbha-griha* in the temples of the western group.

Adjacent to the Parasvanatha temple is the smaller Adinatha temple. It has the usual conglomeration of sculptures. On the outside, however, it has only one band of figures.

Nilkanth Mahadeo and Kunwar Math

With Parasvanath and Adinath we have covered the important temples, those that are within easy reach of the average visitor. But for the benefit of the serious student we must complete the list by adding two temples on the north bank of the Kurar Nala, three-quarters of a mile to the south of the village. These two are called Nilkanth Mahadeo and Kunwar Math.

Nilkanth Mahadeo, dedicated to Siva, is only of antiquarian interest, being just a pile of ruins. The pedestal of the *lingam* is all that remains. However, a pilgrim's inscription carved on the wall of the sanctum gives the date and refers to Siva as 'Gaura', the White God: "In Samvat 1174 (A.D. 1117) on the third of the waning moon of Jyestha, this inscription was engraved, when the Kayastha Jaktura paid his adoration to Sri Gaura."

Kunwar Math, also a Siva temple, with the usual images of Brahma and Vishnu, is equal to the best of the western group in its decorations, and is but little inferior to them in size, being 66 ft. by 33 ft. outside and 58 ft. by 29 ft. inside. This temple is ascribed to the tenth or eleventh century.

The Jatkari Group

In the village of Jatkari, one and a half miles to the south of Khajuraho, there are two temples in ruins and the mounds of several other ruins. One of them is a Siva temple with a marble *lingam*. To the south of this is a Vishnu temple. Still further to the south is a larger Vishnu temple with Vishnu, Brahma and Siva figures over the entrance and a Chaturbhuj image, nine feet high, in the sanctum. The area is in ruins and is a scene of desolation.

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It remains to assess the Khajuraho sculptures. They are all panels, except for the *murtis* and the isolated figures such as that of Surya, Hanuman, Varaha, Vishnu and others. It would appear that at the height of the building frenzy there must have been at least ten thousand workmen on the scene. Something like the scene of the pyramids is conjured up before one's mind: but at Khajuraho there was no slave labour, nor whip lashings, nor unwilling workers. A prominent frieze at Khajuraho shows workmen carrying slabs of stone slung on poles, while a master stonemason is chiselling away at a block.

Sculptors and masons worked close to the scene of the building. Everything was done according to the canons of architecture and sculpture laid down in *Silpa Shastra*. Therefore, the measurements and proportions are correct to a hair's breadth.

As to the sculpture, while the mythological sculptures partake of a standard common to all India, the *mithunas* (couples), the single female nudes and the erotic groups are all done from life. For example, a woman extracting a thorn was then, and and still is, a common sight in India. As for the realistic erotic poses, one explanation is that, following the decline of Buddhism with all the monasticism it implied, there was a release from inhibition to such a degree that mass orgies under ritualistic auspices took place at the time of certain festivals; and that their duplication in sculpture was considered in no way a violation of social susceptibilities.

Perhaps it would be best to leave the explanation of the erotic sculptures at this. After all phallus worship is an ancient institution. Procreation is an indisputable fact of life, and secrecy and prudishness about sexual pleasure can lead only to pornography. In order to obviate such suppression with its attendant prudery, not to say prurience, our ancestors perhaps saw nothing wrong in the depiction of uninhibited sexual enjoyment along with other aspects of life.

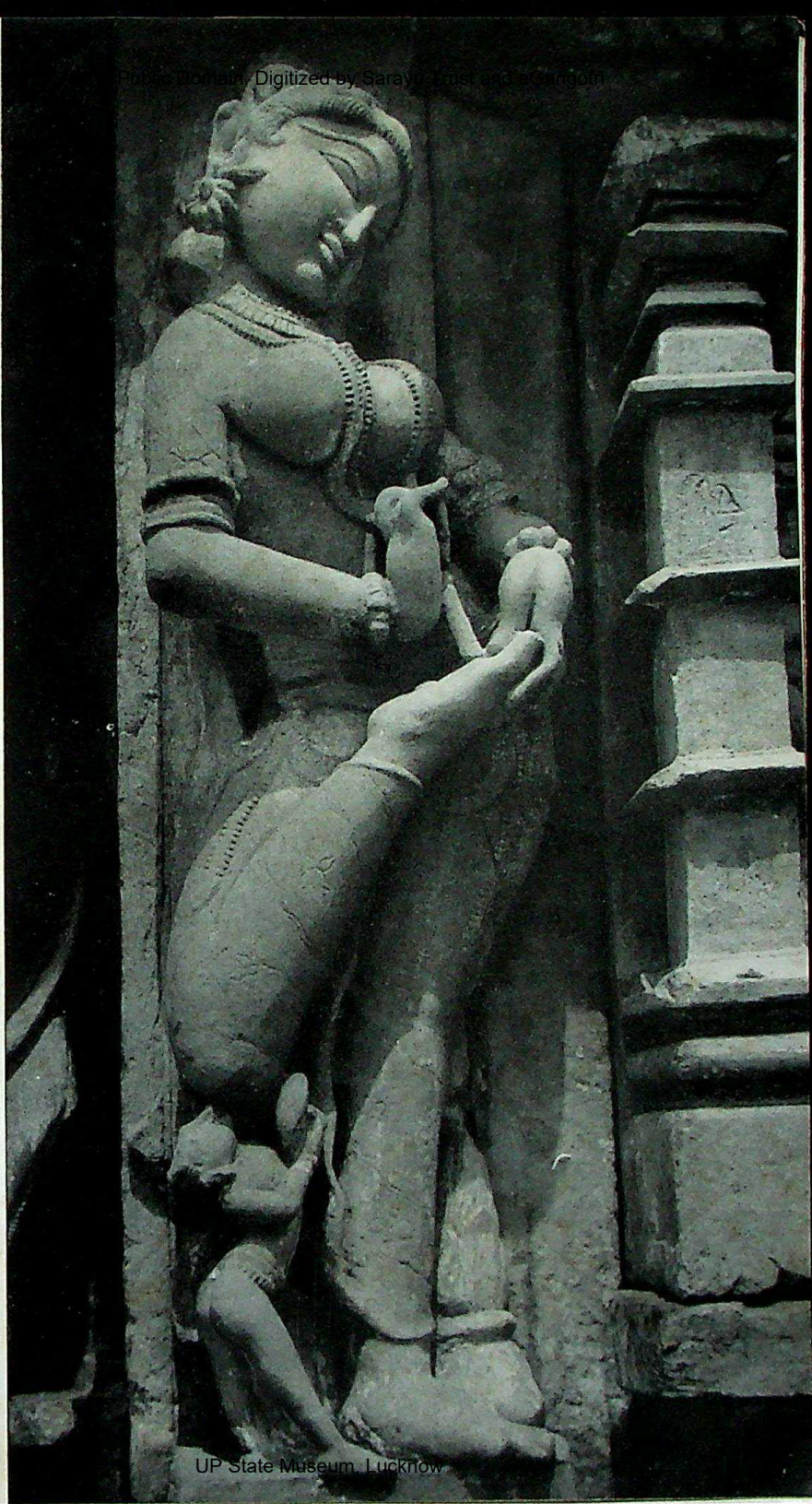
On a more sublime plane one could well quote from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4.3.21):

"That indeed is his form which transcends desire, is bereft of merits and demerits, and is fearless. As a man fully embraced by his dear wife knows nothing external or internal, even so this infinite entity fully embraced by the Supreme Self knows

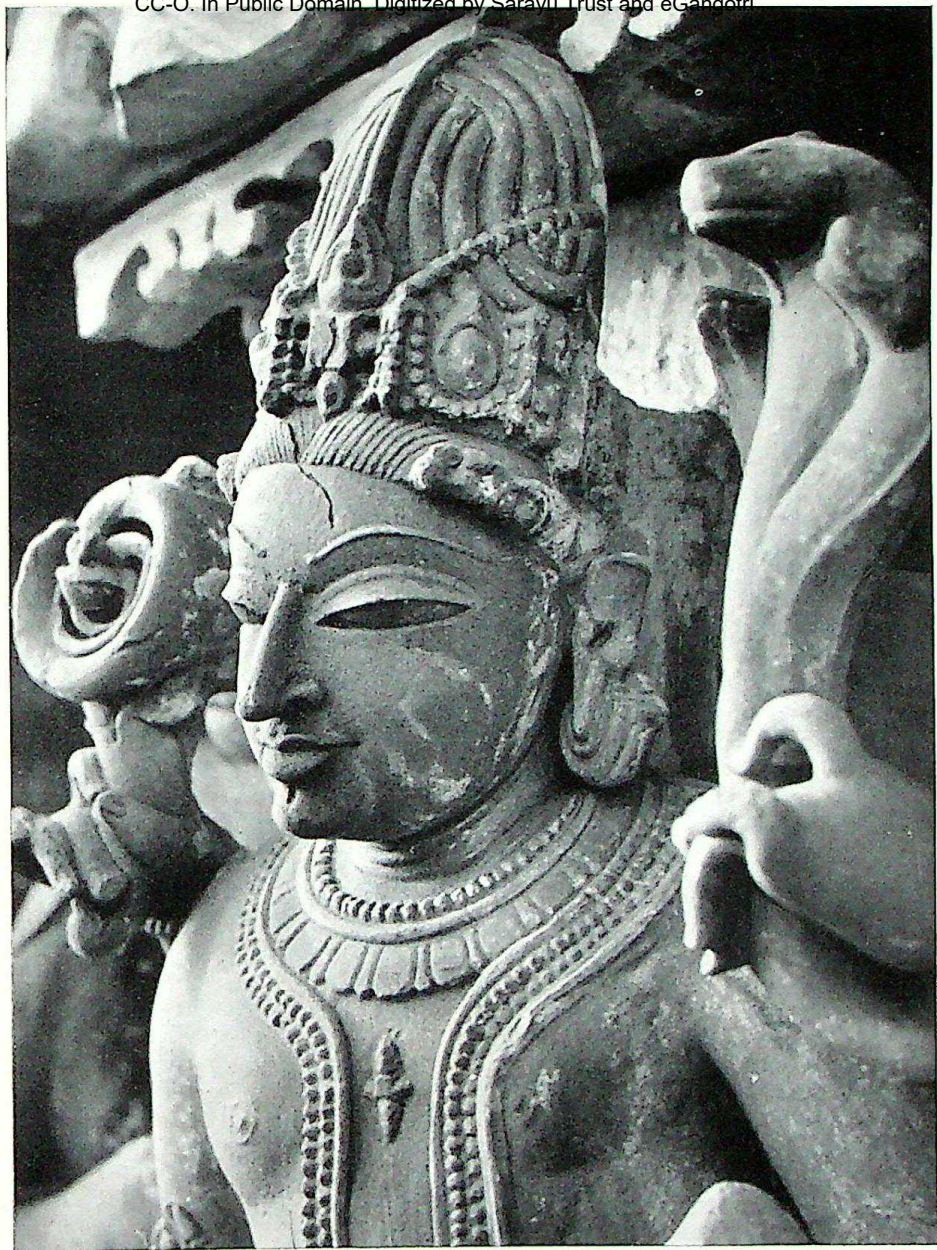
nothing external or internal. That indeed is his form in which all objects of desire have been realised, in which they have become the Self, and which is devoid of desire and beyond grief."

The controversial and unconventional sculptures apart, there is at Khajuraho such a wealth of traditional sculpture conforming to the highest classical standards that they should satisfy the art lover's passion for the beautiful for a lifetime. So, without any apology, we would invite all lovers of the beautiful and classic to admire the overwhelming beauty of line and form created by Indian sculptors a thousand years ago in a frenzy of creation which has known no equal.

*Apsara
extracting a
thorn from
her foot,
Parasvanatha
Temple*







Close-up of Siva, Parasvanatha Temple

(Left) *Apsara applying 'kajal',
Parasvanatha Temple*
UP State Museum, Lucknow



Lovers, Parasvanatha Temple

(Right) Close-up of the above Figure



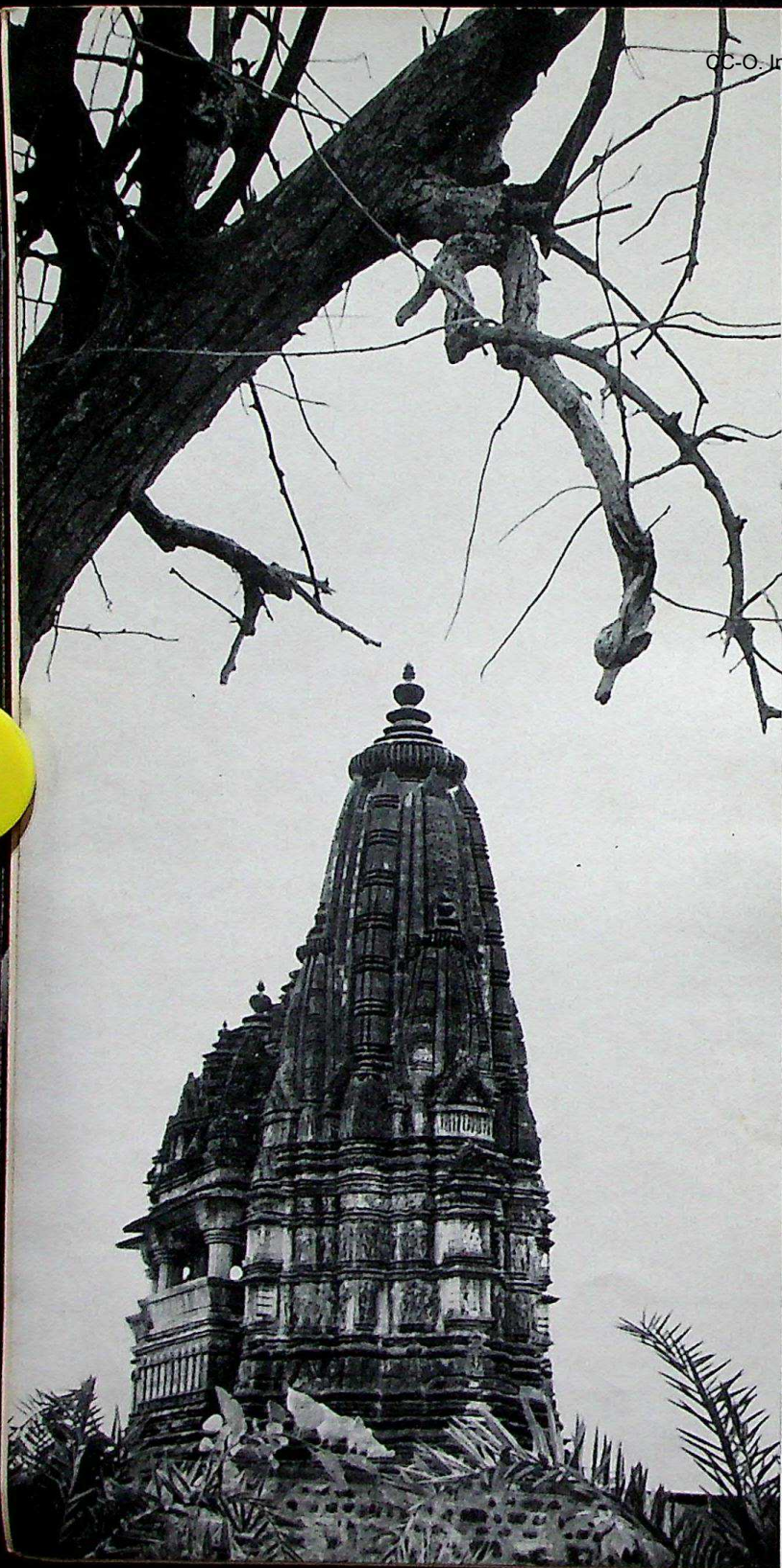


Lovers, Parasvanatha Temple

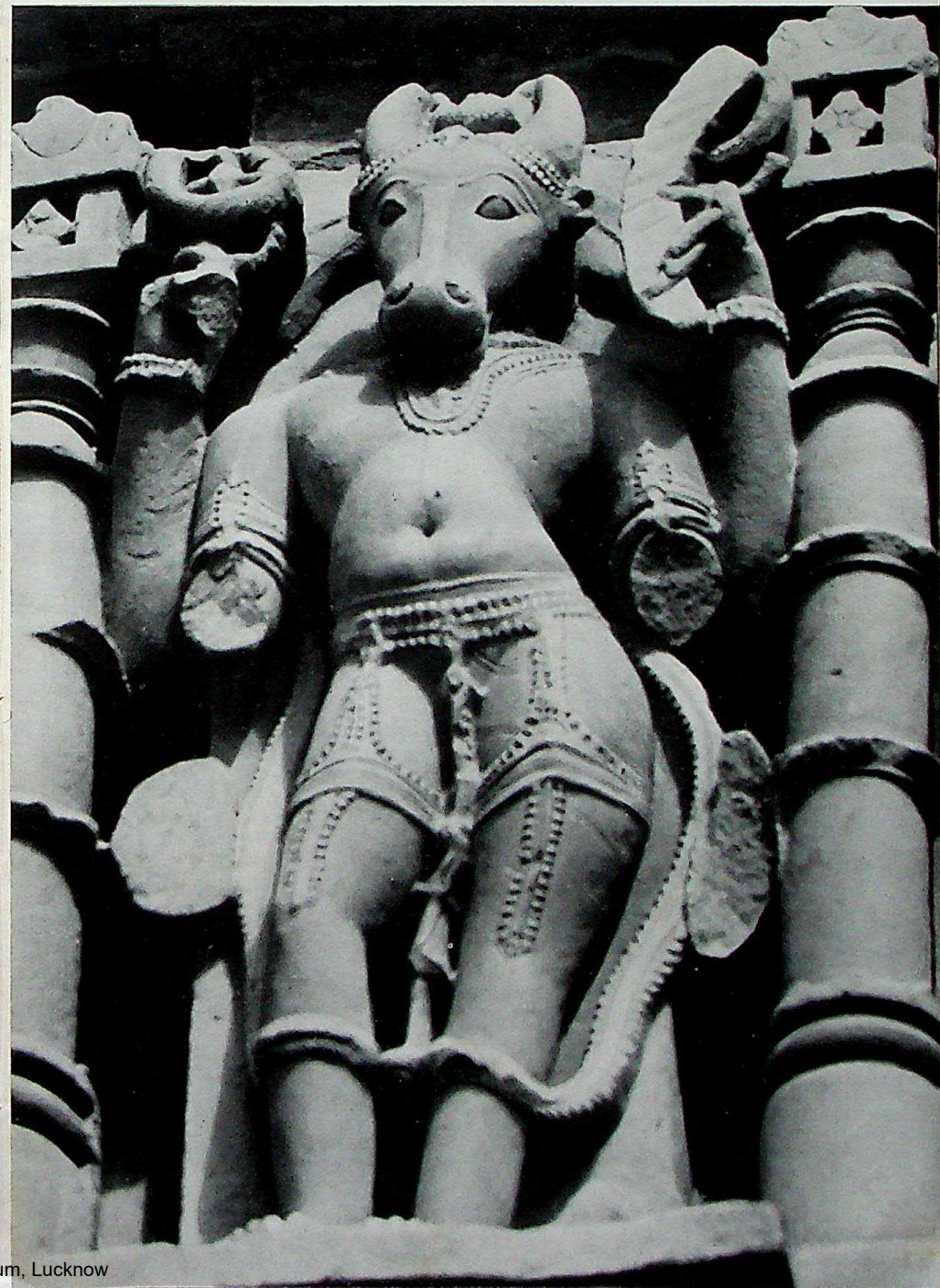
(Right) Close-up of the above Figure



Javeri Temple

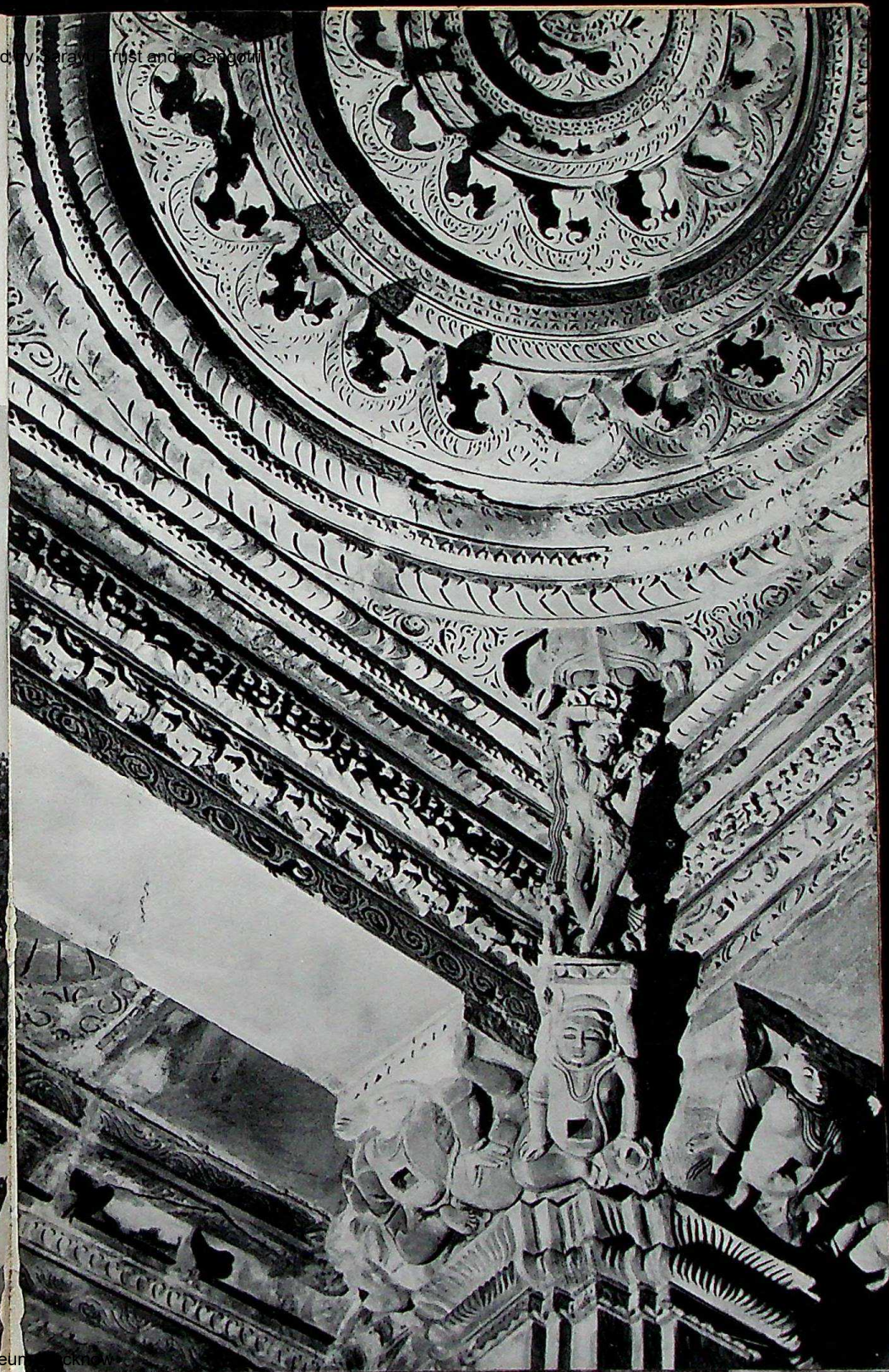
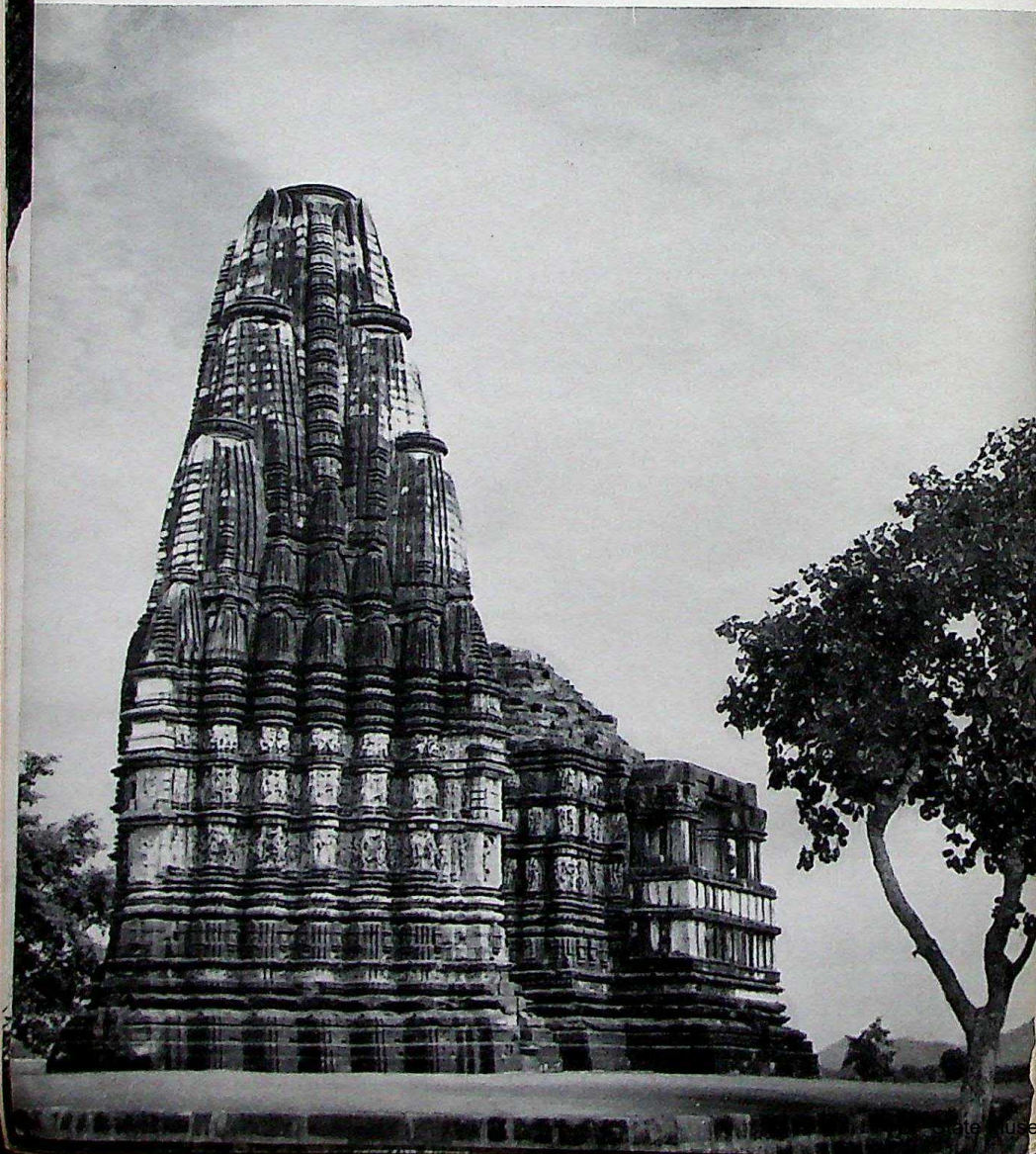


*Vrishabha, the Bull mount of Siva,
on the outer wall of Javeri Temple*



(Right) Ceiling in the Maha- mandapa of the Duldeo Temple

Duldeo Temple





Figures from Vamana Temple



Sura Sundari

(Right) *Dancing Ganesha*,
Khajuraho Museum

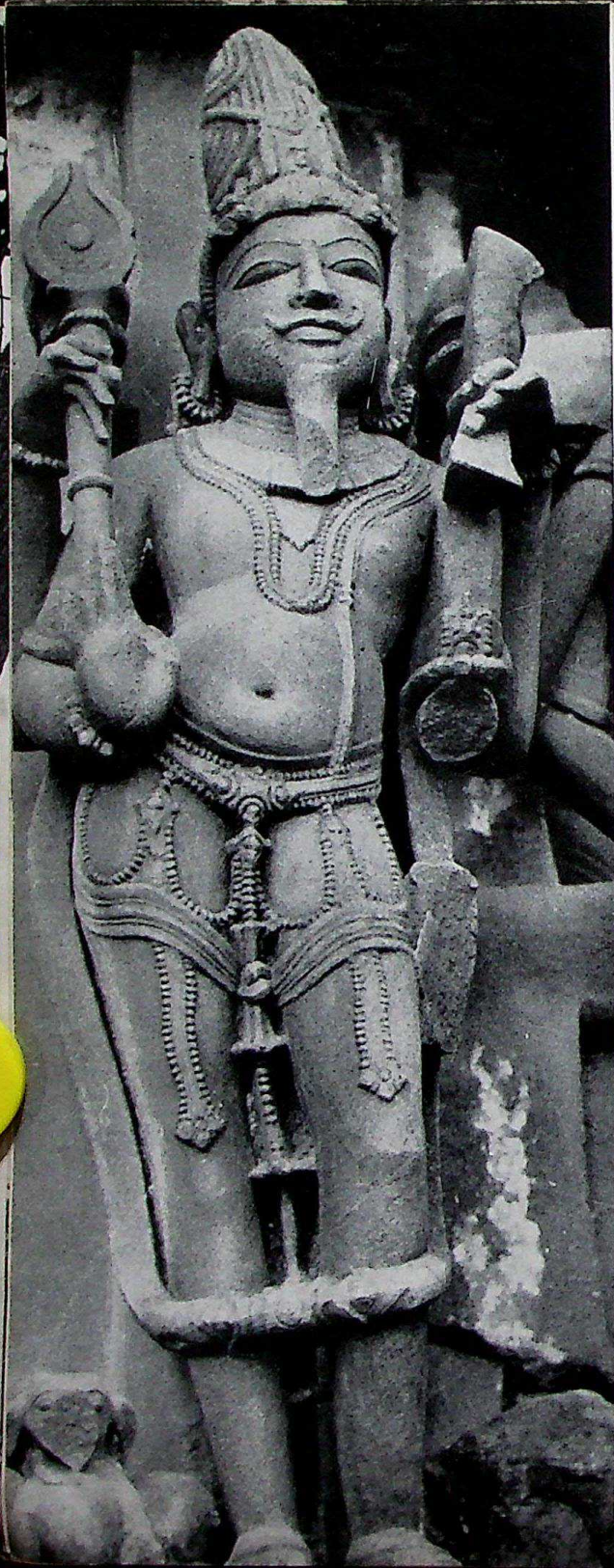


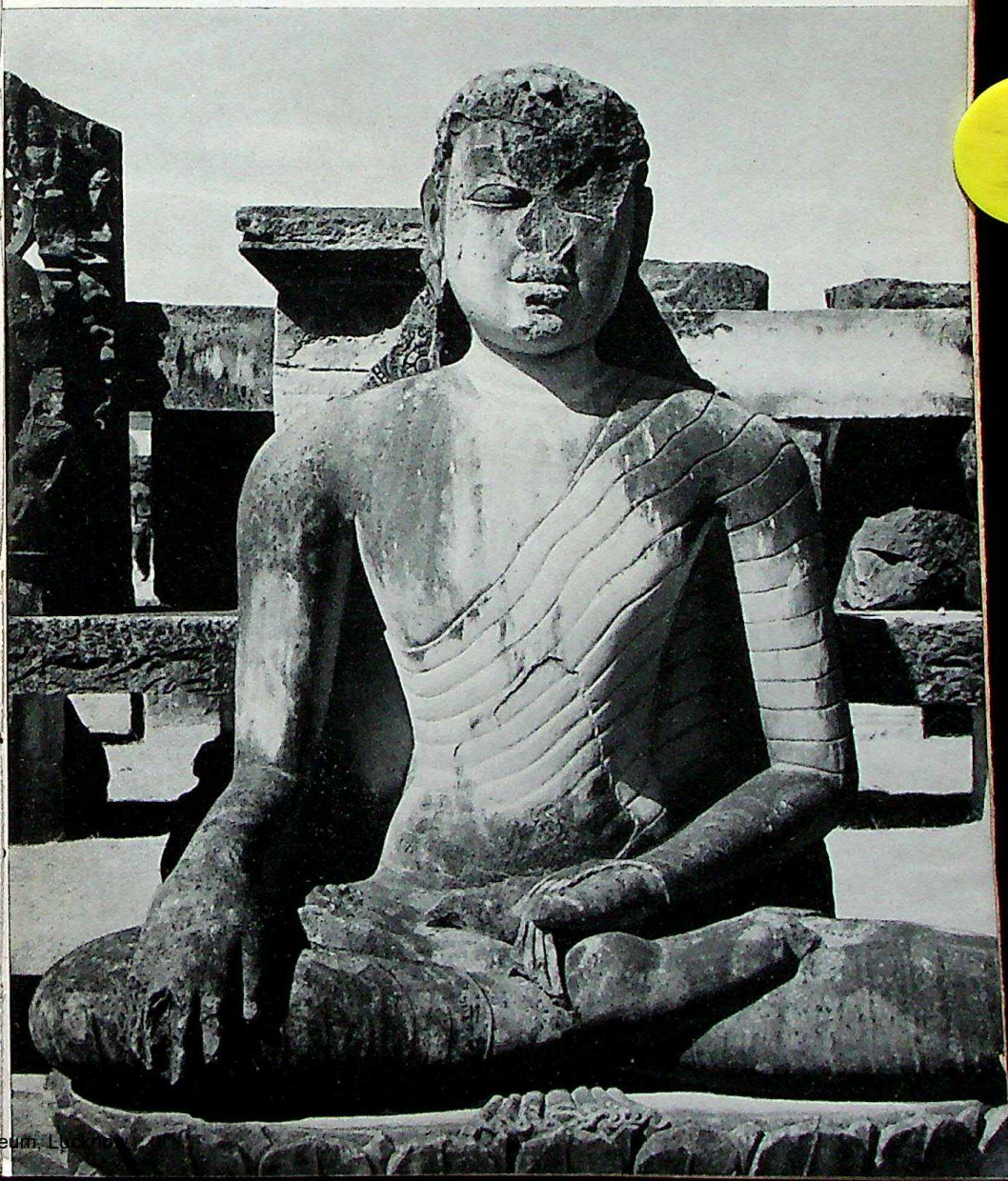
Image of Agni,
the God of Fire



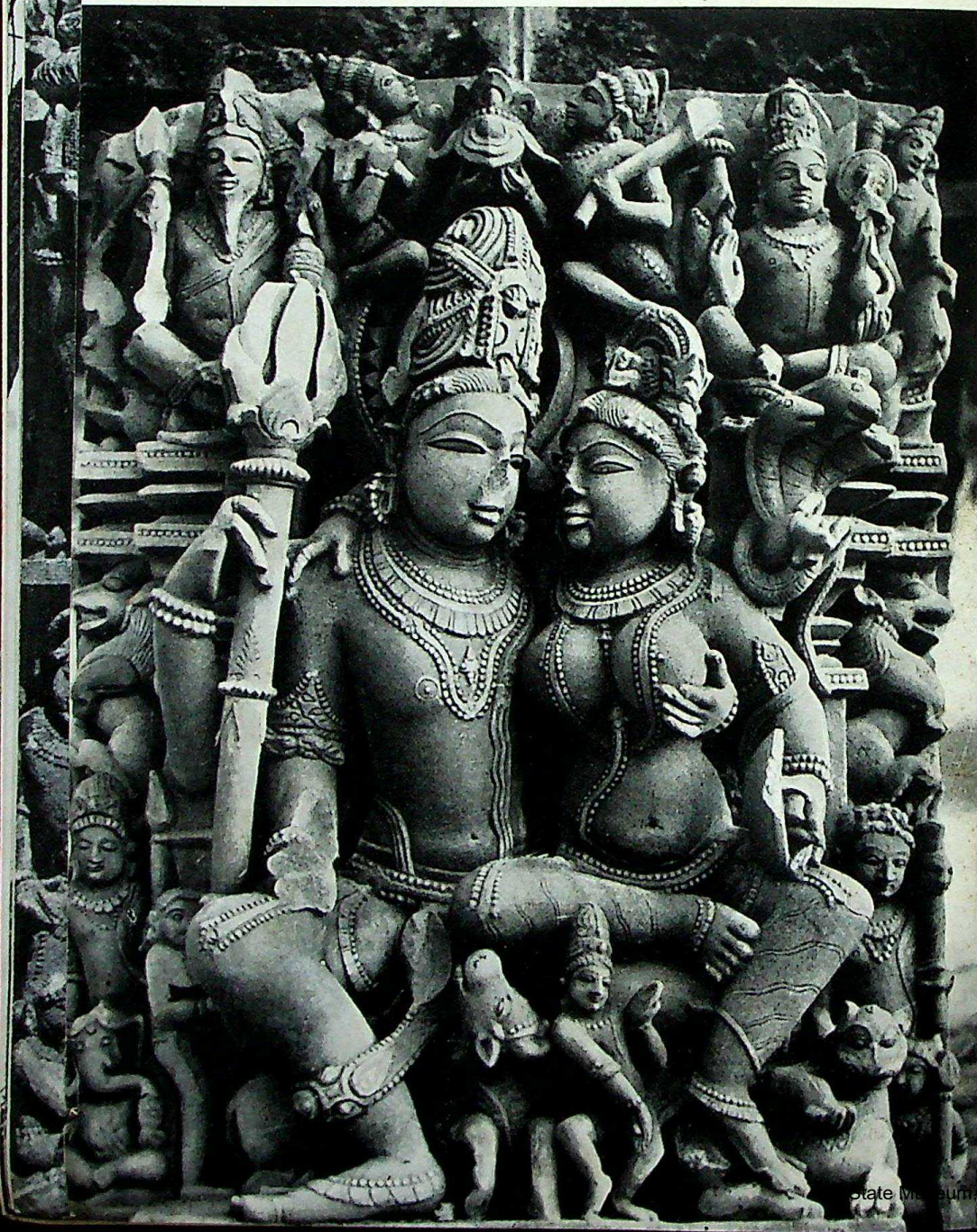


(Left) *Varaha Avatar, or
the Boar Incarnation of
Vishnu, Khajuraho Museum*

*A colossal image of
Buddha, Khajuraho Museum*



Siva and Parvati with their heavenly attendants



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